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Duncan Campbell reveals the high level connections of two ex-CIA terror salesmen

Police chief was gunrunner's official link

AN ASSISTANT Commissioner at Scotland Yard was the official British 'chief contact' of a former CIA agent, Frank Terpil, who has admitted deep involvement in Middle Eastern terrorism, gunrunning, and the organisation of Idi Amin's torture and assassination centre. Jock Wilson, former head of Special Branch, has been identified by Terpil and other sources as a top Scotland Yard official with whom he held a series of meetings in the mid 1970s.

Scotland Yard do not deny allegations of meetings, which were first made to them during research for the TV documentary on Terpil's career, 'The most dangerous man in the world', shown by the new Central TV company ten days ago. Police spokesmen have stressed instead that anything which may have taken place was officially authorised and above board, and concerned with 'national security'.

Terpil is now on the run in the Middle East, having been sentenced *in absentia* to 53 years' imprisonment by a New York Court. He is also wanted in Washington on charges of illegally exporting explosives and terror equipment to Libya. Until he was arrested in New York for arranging illegally to sell guns to undercover police investigators posing as right-wing Caribbean terrorists, he ran a lucrative international empire, with a house in Lancaster Gate, London, a hotel in Cheshire, and homes and business operations in Libya, Uganda, the US and elsewhere. He recently offered to tell his story from a base in Beirut.

During these interviews, Terpil repeatedly referred to his 'excellent relations' with Scotland Yard, and explained: 'my chief contact in Scotland Yard . . . was Jock Wilson. We used to meet with him all the time.' Although untrue and boastful claims by people in Terpil's line of business are commonplace, research by the *New Statesman* and Central TV has established that:

● Reliable police sources confirm the relationship, and say that photographs were taken of some of the meetings between Terpil, Jock Wilson and others. They suggest that Terpil, far from being a renegade, may have been still carrying out CIA assignments, but at arm's length.

● A longstanding friend and colleague of Assistant Commissioner Wilson, Essex-based arms dealer Walter McGowan recalls meeting Terpil and Jock Wilson together at Scotland Yard.

● Jock Wilson's liaison with CIA agents may have begun during his long career as a Special Branch officer when Edwin P. Wilson, Terpil's sometime business partner, ran a CIA operation attacking communist influence in the British dockers' unions in the mid 60s. A secret row was provoked since the operation had had no form of official British intelligence approval.

SCOTLAND YARD's public comments on the Jock Wilson-Terpil link appear to provide astonishing confirmation of continuing CIA involvement in the activities of Terpil and his fugitive colleagues. The Yard's first reaction to enquiries from Central TV in early December, according to inside sources, was 'sheer panic'. Deputy Assistant Commissioner Peter Neivens, in charge of public information, ordered police officers with knowledge of the affair to say absolutely nothing. Heavy pressure was applied to the TV programme makers not to make use of the information. The police then wrote to producer David Jones, explaining why no one would be able to talk to them:

we must stick to our longstanding policy of not discussing publicly matters which have a bearing on national security or our co-operation with both national and international intelligence agencies.

The Yard's Head of Publicity, Julian Bradley, will not now explain the contents of his letter. During discussions last month, he stated:

There was nothing improper about any meeting . . . There is nothing we have to be ashamed of at all.

Bradley also raised the issue of whether Terpil or his colleagues might have met Commissioner Wilson after the time they had been arrested in New York — although he was not asked about this.

Such a suggestion, he said, would be 'treated very seriously.'

There is no cover-up here. We have nothing to hide.

THE YARD has nevertheless offered no explanation of the official British purposes served by any liaison with Terpil. The Yard's alarm was also shared by the Foreign Office, whose staff were warned by memorandum on the day the TV documentary on Terpil was transmitted not to make any comments on its contents. They were also particularly concerned about revelations of Terpil's British connections.

Terpil and his colleague George Korkala appear to have enjoyed privileged access to government contacts. One Scotland Yard officer, who has asked not to be identified, told us this week that Korkala's company, Amstech, had successfully sold large quantities of X-ray and similar anti-terrorist bomb disposal gear to Scotland Yard, provincial police forces, and Ministry of Defence establishments. 'He had access to a lot of places'. When Korkala was arrested in New York he had been caught (with Terpil) offering to supply, and supplying, strychnine poison, exploding briefcases, heavily silenced handguns for assassination work, liquid explosives and 10,000 machine guns to the undercover agents who had posed as a terrorist group. Unsurprisingly, some Scotland Yard officers were deeply shaken by the revelations.

Frank Terpil was also able to enlist the advice of another surveillance, X-ray and anti-terrorist specialist, who worked for the Home Office research establishment at Sandridge near St Albans.

Other suspicions were raised about British government complicity in Edwin Wilson and Terpil's affairs when Wilson made a trip through Heathrow airport in August 1980 after being deported

from Malta. A telex sent from Malta to the Foreign Office was held up there until after Edwin Wilson had disappeared.

The deepest irony of the whole case concerns Edwin Wilson, who clearly enjoyed official connivance from the CIA in his terrorist training programmes in Libya — despite the enormous hostility between the United States and Libya. Edwin Wilson had very clearly continued to do covert intelligence operations after he officially left the CIA — including an operation to arrange the early stages of Nixon's trip to China.

In Britain, the issue of apparent official connivance in these arms-length CIA activities — if such they are — is highly disturbing. In sentencing Terpil and Korkala to 53-year terms without remission, New York Justice Thomas B. Galligan commented:

These men trade in death and destruction, that is their business; they have no allegiance to any flag; they prosper in a world at war, where terrorism and torture are, they are . . .

Just what were senior Scotland Yard officers doing in their company, or buying equipment from them — and why?

Even at a late stage this week, Scotland Yard would not explain the links, but Julian Bradley commented:

National security is the getout . . . Well, I don't say the getout; it's an unfortunate phrase, but you know what I mean . . . (it) justifies . . . secrecy relating to government affairs. □